

Report on the activity of the Social Democracy of Lettland, during the years of 1907, 1908 and 1909.

It is unfortunate that the Social Democracy of Lettland has to send in a report of its activity at a time which represents the most difficult period ever experienced by the labour class in Lettland and in Russia. From Autumn 1905 until the end of 1908 martial law has prevailed in Lettland (governments of Courland and Livonia), after that time, special police supervision has been the order of the day. Up to the beginning of 1907 punitive expeditions and field court martials were in operation in Courland and Livonia, and these on the simple notification of local spies or of the German Barons, tortured, hanged and shot everyone who was only under suspicion of having taken part in the revolutionary movement. It is true that the punitive expeditions and the field court martials were stopped, but the ordinary court martials which replaced them, condemned thousands to death or to penal servitude. From an enquiry that

was made at the beginning of 1910 by the prisoners themselves in one of the main prisons in Riga, it was seen that in that alone are 135 political prisoners who are sentenced to 1,022 years and 6 months penal servitude. Again hundreds were exiled to Siberia and the court martials are still in full activity : thus in Riga in the first half of the present year two death sentences were passed and hundreds are still awaiting trial for participation in the revolution of 1905 and 1906. In addition to this a great number of those who were arrested for social democratic propaganda in the last two years are in prison and awaiting trial by court martial. Such are the political conditions under which the social democracy of Lettland has to work and still continues to do it.

The Social Democracy of Lettland, which since 1906 has at the Congress of Stockholm been united with the Russian social democratic labour party, comprises the following sphere of action : Government of Livonia and Courland and a part of the government of Vitebsk. The members are composed of 4 nationalities, Letts, Russians, Jews and Lithuanians. The greatest number of members are recruited from Letts as the Letts form the greatest part of the local population.

The Social Democracy of Lettland is composed of 8 district organisations, which comprised 16,000 members in 1907, 5,000 in 1908 and 3,500 in 1909. The income of the social democrats amounted in 1907 to 25,291 rbl. 27 kp. and their expenses to 24,316 rbl. 4 kp. (the month of May 1907 is not included in this), in 1908 the income was 6,260 rbl. 90 kp. and the expenses 6,316 rbl. 98 kp. (not including September, October and November). In 1909 the income was 4,192 rbl. 66 kop. and the expenses 4,142 rbl. 62 kp. In these figures only those sums are included which are received by the Central Committee. As the Cen-

tral Committee only received 25 % of the moneys taken in by the organizations and as the rest of the funds are left at the disposal of the local organizations, the real returns for the years reported are much larger. In connection with the Social Democracy of Lettland the so-called « Red-Cross » actively supports the arrested and sentenced comrades, as also a law fund which gratuitously undertakes the defence of comrades in the courts : The income and expenses of the two institutions amounts to some thousands of roubles annually, but these funds are absolutely independent and have not been included in the above mentioned sums.

In Western Europe the Social Democracy of Lettland comprises 15 social democratic groups with 265 comrades and a foreign committee, which helps the Social Democracy of Lettland in a financial and in a literary way. In America two Lettish socialist organizations are at work : The National Lettish organization of the Socialist Party of America with nearly 1,000 members, which is affiliated with the Socialist Party of the United States, and the Lettish Workers Federation with some few hundred comrades. Both these organizations especially the first-named support the Social Democracy of Lettland in a financial manner by special collections. The sums which come from Lettish comrades living abroad were in 1907 and 1908, quite considerable for instance in 1908 they formed half the Budget of the Social Democracy of Lettland. In 1909 this material support was considerably reduced, with the exception of Western Europe, but it still forms a considerable part in the management of the Social Democracy of Lettland and of the « Red Cross » which is working in conjunction with it.

The membership of the Social Democracy of Lettland in 1909 as compared with 1907, was considerably

reduced, and at the same time the income decreased also. Let us mention a few factors here which will explain the cause of this. In the beginning of 1904 the Social Democracy of Lettland included about 1,000 members and with the growth of the revolutionary movement the number of members increased rapidly and in the revolutionary period, namely 1905 and 1906, this increase became still more rapid, until it reached its highest point. A great number of the comrades at that time came from the middle-class, who, in the revolutionary period joined the organized proletariat, but when the counter revolution was victorious and reaction broke out, they left the ranks of social democracy. The industrial crisis which prevailed during the years under consideration — 1907, 1908 and 1909 — in Lettland and still exists, considerably crippled the fighting energy of the proletariat and many of the organized but lesser class-conscious workingmen left, for that reason, the ranks of social democracy. We must also mention in particulars as a factor having a depressing effect on the fighting spirit of the workingmen of Lettland, in addition to the political state of the country, the cruelty of the local police and protective troops with their mass persecutions and inquisition. In 1906 and 1907 the Riga secret police, with tortures worthy of the middle ages, brought to bear on political prisoners, have become notorious and not only the Riga secret police, also the ordinary police and the honorary police recruited from the German Barons in Libau, Mitau, Windau and other small towns and in the provinces, punished and tortured the political prisoners, especially making use of a new mode of punishment « shooting down during flight ». The political chastisements and tortures which were put into practice in 1906 and 1907 have lost a great deal in extent, but they have not yet been stopped and

cases still occur in which political prisoners are chastised. What they cannot or will not obtain through chastisement, they seek to obtain through intimidation, or persuasion to provocation and denunciation. During the whole year of 1909 and even yet in Riga political prisoners are offered freedom and money compensation and even good posts in the police force, if they will betray their comrades. As reaction was raging the government sought in every way to demoralise the masses. The Social Democracy in Lettland has suffered considerably from provocation and denunciation, which in turn has caused a relaxation and a reduction in the membership of the Party. But the crisis appears to have been overcome. During the whole period of the counter revolution and reaction the Social Democracy of Lettland did not for a moment relax their activity and the idea of social democracy and the final object of socialism has been more clearly and distinctly put before the masses than was the case three years ago. Now that the middle-class element has disappeared the organization is composed of the city and country proletariat, as well as of that unimportant number of intellectuals, who either on account of their economic position or because of revolutionary traditions are inseparably connected with the proletariat. As however the latter comprises so small a number all the activity and the leadership are in the hands of the workingman. And that is a guarantee that the Social Democracy of Lettland, will be able to overcome the reprisals of the reaction until such time, when all obstacles which hinder the development of the Russian proletariat shall have been swept away by the pressure of the proletariat of Russia.

The activity of the Social Democracy of Lettland for 1907, 1908 and 1909 consisted chiefly in the following : — to strengthen and maintain the local orga-

nizations and to renew the organising activity in those places where it had been interrupted by the counter revolution, by sending out propagandists and distributing social democratic literature.

In the years under consideration the following literature has been published : The illegal Lettish social democratic central organ *Zihna (The Struggle)* in 47 numbers, from N° 60/99 and n° 101/107, altogether 429,500 copies, also an illustrated May paper on May 1, 1907 in an edition of 10,000 copies, *Political questions of the hour* N° 12, 4,000 copies and the Bulletin of the C. K. of the Social Democracy of Lettland N°s 1, 2 and 3, with 18,000 copies. Besides these in Russian the paper *Borba (The Struggle)* 10 numbers, 11 to 20, 33,000 copies; *Golos Soldata (The Soldiers' Voice)* 5 numbers (24-28) 15,000 copies, also *Schtik (The Bayonet)* in 10 numbers (1-10) 48,000 copies. Both of the last editions were intended for the army organization. In explanation let us add that in the Social Democracy of Lettland, as early as 1905 and still in 1907 and part of 1908, for special agitation purposes, the so-called army organisation was formed among the soldiers, which had its own committee and published its own special literature. Besides all this in Riga a paper *Towaritch (The Comrade)* was printed for the scholars' organisation in Russian (N°s 1, 2 and 3) 3,000 copies. Altogether 561,000 copies of newspapers were printed by the Central Committee of the Social Democracy of Lettland and 1,149,700 copies of pamphlets. Of the latter 836,800 were published in Lettian, 244,900 copies in Russian, and 12,500 copies specially for the soldiers; 52,000 in Lithuanian, 9,500 in German and 3,000 in Jewish. We have included in these the literature printed in the secret presses of the C. K. The literature of the local organisations which also appears in some ten thousands of copies annually, is not included in these

figures. All of this literature is printed in the illegal secret presses. But at the end of 1909, after several arrests in the secret printing offices and many sacrifices of men and material (10 comrades were sentenced to 63 years penal servitude, 9 comrades to 18 years imprisonment and 17 comrades exiled to Siberia for life) it was decided to print the Central organ of the Social Democracy of Lettland abroad and only to print occasional pamphlets in Lettland itself. In August of the same year appeared the first number of the *Messenger of Social Democracy (Socialdemokratijas Wehstnesis)* which was published by the foreign committee of the Social Democracy of Lettland as a theoretical organ. Seven numbers were published altogether and 16,000 copies and now in its stead the *Zihna* the central organ of the Social Democracy of Lettland is published again. *The road to power* by Karl Kautsky has just been published, translated into Lettian, 4,000 copies. In addition to the above mentioned illegal literature several ten thousand copies of Marxian books and magazines have been published in Lettland (some have been confiscated). It must especially be pointed out here that during the last 3 years, with a few interruptions, a legal Marxian paper has been published twice weekly in Lettian, whose object was to further the development and the enlightenment of the class-consciousness of the labour class.

The Social Democracy of Lettland held its second Congress in the summer of 1907 (second after the Social Democracy of Russia and fourth since the foundation of the Social Democracy of Lettland) and in the autumn of 1908 its third Congress was held (or fifth) and during the period of three years they have held several party conferences, whose chief object was to survey all previous value and to work up new tactics. Much that had seemed useful during the

revolution had now to be eliminated and tactics had to be drawn up which would be in harmony with the necessities of the present time.

The Social Democracy of Lettland did not take part in the elections for the first Russian Douma. For the election of the second Douma we nominated several candidates but the government did everything possible in opposition to the social democratic party and we succeeded only in electing in Riga a social democrat deputy Comrade J. Ohsol. In spite of the fact that by the coup d'état of June 3, the Russian government had considerably altered the election system for the worse, the workingmen of Riga succeeded in the II ward in gaining a victory over the larger bourgeois party of Riga and by a majority of some hundred votes — about 300 — elected the social democrat candidate Dr. Preedkaln in the third Douma, although during the election agitations he had been put into prison as a political offender.

The Social Democracy of Lettland did not take part in the city corporation or municipal elections, as the workingmen are excluded from the right to vote. However in respect to the election the C. K. of the Social Democracy of Lettland has published a municipal programme and pamphlets pointing out the erroneous undemocratic arrangement of the municipal elections, which also explain the difference of classes. As regards the self government election system in the country, the landed proprietors and stewards each have one vote, agricultural labourers and those possessing no land have 1/10 of a vote. The Social Democracy takes part in these and in several places has elected its deputies. The latter are fighting for the classification of municipal taxes according to progressive scale of income and they have succeeded in bringing this about in several places; they also are fighting for special invalid and poverty insurance

and the improvement of the people's education.

With regard to the legal form of the labour movement the administration of Courland do not admit trades unions at all. Agricultural labourers have not even any legal rights to form labour unions. In Riga the first trades unions (the printers' union was formed earlier) were organized only towards the end of 1908. There are 9 trades unions altogether in Riga with 5,000 members and two trades union papers were published the *Arodneeks* (*The Trades Unionist*) twice monthly in Lettian and the *Baltic Bookworker* (1) once a month in German. Two thirds of the trades unions are under the influence of Social Democracy. The administration prohibits lectures for the education of the members, except those which directly refer to the trade, such as how the tailor shall make clothes, how baker shall bake bread and so on. The trades unions are forbidden to take action for the improvement of labour conditions of their members, in short for every step they take for the improvement of the position of workingmen, the trades unions are closed. For this reason in all economic questions and conflicts, the workingmen look to social democracy as their sole guide and help, as has been proved by all economic conflicts and strikes up to now. For instance recently the masons of Riga applied to the Social Democracy with the proposal to publish for them a pamphlet and this was willingly complied with. By thus persecuting the trades unions, the government destroys every hope the workingmen may entertain of improving his condition by legal means and forces them to turn to Social Democracy.

There are no social democratic women's and young

(1) *Der Baltische Bucharbeiter.*

people's organisations, but in the high schools there are scholar organizations which organize in secret circles and publish papers now and then as well as pamphlets.

The workingmen are forming education societies in towns and in the country, but the administrations place many obstacles in their way, prohibit lectures, persecute lecturers and close the societies. Workingmen cooperative societies have also been formed in recent years but the administration prohibits them to unite for cooperation and in every way hinders their development. Their activity is still very limited.

In order to bring the activity of the legal labour unions and other societies under their influence and to maintain the same, the social democracy has organized in them social democratic centres, which send delegates to the illegal bureaux of the trades unions and the educational and other societies, and it is the duty of these bureaux to guide the activity of the legal unions and societies in the spirit of social democracy.

*The Central Committee
of the Social Democracy of Lettland.*



FINLAND

Report of the Social Democratic Party

The period from 1907 tot 1910 marks a turning point in our country. During this period the present reactionary rulers prepared a decisive attack against Finnish autonomy and its democratic liberty. The Russian government commences the destruction of the fundamental rights of Finland and before our eyes the majority in the third Duma sanctioned this abominable deed. During this year the Finnish Socialist Party had the difficult task to utilise with all its force the results obtained during the revolutionary year of 1905 and to fortify as much as possible the positions gained, to follow with sustained attention the machinations of Russian reaction and the plans of the interior, always to be ready to defend the interests and the rights of the proletariat, to continue and to reinforce the resistance of the labour class by the prospective combat for the Finnish liberal constitution.

We must in a few words touch on the Finnish political autonomy.

During the war with Sweden, the Diet was convened in 1809 at Borgå where Alexander I with great